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K. Spenser

S P E N C E R ' s
F A I R Y - Q U E E N ,

ATTEMPTED IN

B L A N K V E R S E .

C A N T O I .



L O N D O N :

Printed for T. DAVIES, in *Russel Street, Covent Garden*, Bookfeller to the
Royal Academy; and sold by J. BEW, *Pater-noster Row*.

M, DCC, LXXIII.

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SPENCER

FAIRY-QUEEN

THE Transposer of the following Canto has undertaken this work with a view to render the Poem of the Fairy Queen more intelligible, having met with many persons of understanding and a taste for reading, who whilst they admire the imagery, invention, and sentiments of the Author, do not chuse to be at the pains to seek for them amongst his uncouth phrases and obsolete stile: if this Specimen is approved by the indulgent Public, the remainder of the Poem is ready for the press, and the whole will be comprized in one neat pocket volume, which as it will give the Reader the substance of four volumes at a much less expence, will not, it is presumed, hide from his view one real beauty of this valuable work, the Editor having attended to the original as much as possible, and scarcely ventured (except the versification) to make any material alteration in a plan formed by such a great master of Nature.

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S P E N C E R ' s
F A I R Y - Q U E E N,
Attempted in Blank Verse.

C A N T O I.

The ARGUMENT of the First Canto.

Subject proposed. — Invocation. — Knight of the red Cross, or Holiness. — His Embassy. — Description of Una, or Truth. — A Storm. — A neighbouring Wood. — The Den of Error. — Error described. — The Knight combats her and gains the Victory. — Meets Hypocrisy disguised, turns aside with him. — The House of Sleep and Morpheus. — Hypocrisy's Attempts to mislead the Knight and disfigure the Face of Truth.

N O more my Muse her shepherd's weeds shall wear,

But change her oaten-pipe for trumpets loud,

And sing of noble deeds which long have slept;

Fierce warrs and faithful loves shall grace my song:

Come, Holy Virgin ! chieftest of the nine
Assist my genius and inspire my theme.
A gentle Knight was riding on the plain,
In mighty arms and silver shield array'd,
Wherein appear'd old dints of deepest wounds;
His angry steed chiding the foaming bit
Disdain'd the curb : a valiant knight he seem'd,
For noble deeds and fierce encounters form'd;
Upon his breast he bore a bloody cross,
The dear remembrance of his dying Lord,
Whom he ador'd as living evermore ;
The Mark adorn'd his shield, emblem of Hope
Which in HIS help he had : in deed and word
Faithful he was ; yet seem'd oft'times afraid ;
Fearful he seem'd yet dreaded was by all :
Bound on a mighty enterprize, conferr'd

By

SPENCER. CANTO I.

3

By GLORIANA, Queen of Fairy-Land;

He long'd to prove his valor on his foe

A Dragon horrible: beside him rode

A virtuous Lady on a snow-white steed,

Herself much fairer, veil'd her beauties were

And cover'd with a mourning robe, as one

That inly pin'd from some corroding woe:

A milk-white lamb she led, that emblem seem'd

Of her pure self; descended from old kings

That late had stretch'd their sceptres o'er the world,

'Till that foul fiend fore ravag'd all the land,

And cast them out from all their old domains:

Them to avenge, this knight from far she brought,

And him compell'd with the constraints of virtue

To rid her of her foe. And as they went

The day with clouds was suddenly o'ercast,

And angry Jove an hideous storm of rain
So swiftly pour'd into his lover's lap,
That ev'ry traveller a shelter sought.
Not distant far they spied a shady grove,
Whose lofty trees bedeck'd with Summer's pride
Were spread so broad they hid the light of Heaven,
And shut out ev'ry star : soon they arriv'd,
And ent'ring in found num'rous winding ways,
With footing worn, and leading inward far :
So on they pass'd, pleas'd with the harmony
Of various birds that shelter'd from the storm,
And seem'd in song to scorn the cruel sky :
Much did they praise the trees so straight and tall,
The failing pine, the cedar's tow'ring top,
The vine prop'd elm, the poplar never dry,
The builder oak, (the sov'reign of the woods)

SPENCER CANTO I.

The aspine strong, the cypress funeral,
 The laurel, (crown of mighty conquerors,
 And poets sage) the fir that weepeth still,
 The willow worn by disappointed love,
 And oft by genius: the obedient yew,
 The birch for shafts, the fallow for the mill,
 The myrrhe sweet bleeding in the bitter wound,
 The warlike beach, the ash for nought unfit,
 The fruitful olive and the round plantain,
 The carver holme, the maple seldom found;
 Delighted thus they still beguil'd their way
 Until the storm was o'er, then sought return,
 But sought in vain, so num'rous were the paths:
 At length amidst the woods most deep recess
 A cave they spy'd, 'twas ERROR's hateful den,
 Which well the lady knew, and to avoid

Advis'd the knight, but he unaw'd reply'd,
 Eternal shame I ever should deserve
 Now to recede, VIRTUE has light within,
 Sufficient to illume her guiltless breast,
 Amidst the thickest darknesses VICE can form.
 Then enter'd in with haste, his shining armour
 Caus'd a small glimm'ring light, much like a shade,
 By which he saw the ugly * Monster plain,
 Half like a serpent, half of woman's Shape
 Most loathsome to behold: outstretch'd she lay,
 Her huge long tail with many knots upwound
 O'erspread the den, pointed with mortal sting:
 Upon her breasts a thousand young she bore

* See MILTON's Description of Sin.

SPENCER. CANTO II

7

Whom she sustain'd each day, various their shapes,
Yet each appear'd most horrid to the view.
Soon as th' unusual light upon them shone
They crept into her mouth and kennel'd there:
At sight of human form their dam rush'd forth
Curling her hideous tail around her head,
But swift recoil'd; for she could ne'er endure
The smallest gleam of light, which when he saw
He flew as lions on their fearful prey,
Nor suffer'd her retreat: then much incens'd
She roar'd so loud, that all the gloomy cave
Resounded horrible: and turning fierce,
Advanc'd her speckled tail, threat'ning her sting:
But he all undismay'd up-rais'd his hand
And from her head unto her shoulders glanc'd:
At which inrag'd, she leap'd upon his shield

And

SPENCER. CANTO I.

And curl'd her train around him many a fold;
 Now when his lady saw, she pitying said
 Soon will your fortitude and grace be prov'd,
 Add faith to force and be not ought afraid:
 He heard, and all on fire to be unloos'd,
 Exerting all his might he seiz'd her throat,
 And caus'd her soon to quit her devilish hold.
 Then from her filthy mouth such poison ran,
 Whole floods of nauseous books and papers vile,
 With loathsome frogs and toads, all wanting eyes,
 Which forc'd him back, nor could he longer fight;
 Chear'd with success (such chear as can arise
 In spirits debas'd) she pour'd forth her spawn,
 Like living creatures on the banks of Nile;
 These clung around the knight, but hurt him not,
 No more than cumb'rous gnats annoy the swain

51A

Who

Who marks his num'rous flocks at even-tide,
When ruddy PHOEBUS 'gins to set in West,
For soon with clownish hands he strikes them off
Marring their murmurs. So this virtuous knight
Treated the monsters that from ERROR sprang,
And her he smote with more than manly force
(So GOD him aided) that her head straight fell
From off her wicked corse, from whence black blood
Distain'd the ground ; her scatter'd brood flock'd round
And fought their wonted entrance, that deny'd
They suck'd her blood and thence receiv'd new strength ;
New strength it seem'd, but death it prov'd to all.
This virtuous pair then took their lonely way,
Thro' num'rous paths that almost endless seem'd ;
At last the chearful rays of light appear'd
And their glad eyes rehaul'd the splendid fun,

Engag'd in fit discourse, they journey'd on

And as they went they met a rev'rend man;

His feet all bare, his head all hoary grey,

In sober sadness low he bent his eyes,

Nor ought malicious seem'd: and praying walk'd,

To whom the knight, when salutations o'er,

Know you of ought that seeks a quick redress?

Then thus he answer'd, how can ancient man

That all day tells his beads, and fits his soul

For future scenes, know what afflicts the world?

Yet can I tell you of a wicked man

Who wastes the country in a desert wild,

Far hence he dwells secure; haste then reply'd

The valorous man, but she his better guide

Intreated him to rest, tarry all night

She

She said, and on the morrow you shall pass,
Even the Sun that measures Heav'n all day
At night sets up his steeds among the * waves.
So by the godly man's advice they went
To his low cottage, far from mortal foot,
Down in a dale, hard by a forest's side,
A little distant stood the holy house
Where he was wont to pray at morn and eve;
A crystal fountain innocently play'd
And seem'd to sooth the weary'd travellers,
Rest was their feast, and all things at their will,
The noblest mind the best contentment has:
In fair discourse the ev'ning slid away,

* And at ev'n sips with the ocean.

MILTON.

For the old man of pleasing words had store,
His tongue like glass, of fairs and popes he talk'd,
And ave-marias evermore he strew'd:
Then rest they fought, with labor overcome
And the sad drowsy humor fill'd their eyes,
As if the messenger of sleep had thrown
His velvet mantle o'er them; whilst their host
Try'd magic spells to wake black PEUTO's dame,
And call'd on GORGON, prince of shades and night,
At which Styx flees and bold Cocytus quakes:
Nor did he fear to curse the LORD of LIFE.
Then from the dread deep darkness he invok'd
Legions of spirits, which like little flies
Flutt'ring around him, instant fought his will;

Of these he chose out two, the falsest two,
The one he kept, the other wing'd with speed

He

He sent thro' yielding air, and thro' the world
Of waters wide and deep, to MORPHEUS' house;
Within the earth's deep womb where day ne'er comes
His dwelling is, where TETHYS his wet bed
Doth ever wash, and where the moon still sleeps
His ever drooping head in silver dew;
Whilst baleful night her sable mantle spreads:
The double gates he found fast lock'd and barr'd,
And wakeful dogs before them watching still,
To banish care, that, enemy to sleep
Deep drown'd in deepest sleep he MORPHEUS finds,
A trickling stream from high rock falling down
And ever drizzling rain upon the top,
Mixt with a murm'ring wind like swarming bees
For ever lull'd him; noise ne'er enters there,
But Quiet wrap'd in silence listless lies:

The spirit then in haste his message told,
But his waste words return'd to him in vain
For MORPHEUS slept as if to wake no more.
At last, as one that dreams, whose brain is toft,
He mutter'd softly, till he heard the name
Of HECATE; then his heavy head 'gan quake
And hastily he ask'd, what bus'ness caus'd
Such rude uproar? then thus the messenger,
He that the stubborn spirits instant tames
By name ARCHIMAGO, has sent me here,
And straight commands a dream that can delude
The sleeper's keenest scent; a dream most fit
To lull the ear of Virtue, and seduce
The cautious pilgrim to the paths of Folly:
The god obey'd, and straightway call'd a dream
Out of his darksome den, and gave to him:

Immediate

Immediate then reclin'd his drowfy head,
Sunk as before in ever careless sleep :
Swift to his lord the spirit bore the dream
Upon his little wings, as soars the lark
To meet Heav'n's clearest light : his guileful lord
Meanwhile with secret charms and hidden wiles
Had made a lady of the other spirit,
Of liquid air so delicately form'd
And lovely to behold, it almost caught
The maker's sense : so worshippers of old
Ador'd the idol which their hands had made.
This form he clad in white, and a long robe
Of mournful hue he gracefully bestow'd,
Most like to virtuous UNA it appear'd :
Now when the treach'rous dream was to him brought,
He taught the spirit, and the new form'd fair

How to deceive the knight, who slept secure,
 No evil fearing, as intending none;
 His fancy now disturb'd with wanton dreams,
 He thought his lady at his ear complain'd
 That false wing'd CUPID had subdu'd her heart,
 And made her stubborn virtue almost yield;
 And VENUS queen of beauty there appear'd,
 And all the Graces sung in softest air
 And FLORA crown'd her with an ivy wreath,
 Whilst HYMEN ever youthful danc'd around:
 He waking soon as one in great amaze
 Saw her whom he esteem'd his sole delight;
 Then thus she said, ah! Sir, my only lord
 Shall I accuse the hidden cruel fates
 Of highest Heav'n? or the blind god of love
 That thus I tell what else were never known?

Shall

SPENCER CANTO II

17

How your dear sake forc'd me at first to leave
My father's throne; then as one chear'd with tears
Her speech she stop'd, but soon resum'd her plaint;
My weaker years said she intreat your aid,
Let me not die with sorrow thus oppress'd
To whom the knight with innocence reply'd,
Why what should now dismay your virtuous mind,
You that was frequent wont to comfort me?
Love of yourself (she said) forbids my peace
And makes me waste the night in fruitless sighs.
Her words awake within his candid breast
A strange suspicion of her virgin truth;
Yet as he knew no ill, he would not spurn
Her seeming love, but sought her to console
By softest words which thus with grace he spoke:
Let not vain fears disturb your wish'd repose,

D

For

SPENCER CANTO II

For be assur'd as life is to my heart

So dear I hold your love, and think myself

Bound to your service by the tenderest ties

As one not quite content, yet much pleas'd,

Whilst hope fresh dawns upon the troubled mind,

She slid away, as tho' she sought to rest:

Long time he mus'd on this adventure strange,

Much griev'd to think her virtue was so weak:

At length in sleep's soft arms he sunk again.

END of the FIRST CANTO

A strange suspicion of her virgin truth;

Yet as he knew no ill, he would not think

Her seeming lost; but sought her to console

By softer words, which thus with grace he spoke:

Let not vain fears disturb your wild repose!